

From: R. P. Bell
To: Microsoft ATR
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Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Over twenty years of computing experience, primarily within the DOS/Windows environment -- because I had very little choice otherwise -- has taught me that the real growth of Microsoft has been on the backs and over the protests of "the little guy." The truth is, there were simply no alternatives to Microsoft, and in spite of the growing financial coffers of Microsoft, there has been a relentless cycle of upgrading expense that has finally grown to the point of absurdity.

In 1987, I began a small computer consulting firm that eventually became a corporation. Our target vertical market, law enforcement records management and municipal accounting, was just coming into it's own (especially in small departments and municipalities). Usually, we would install Novell as the internal network. Experience proved that Novell was a company with substantial technical savvy and a commitment to client satisfaction. Novell was a company that had truly pioneered the network opportunity, offering substantial benefits to those who were motivated to learn and market their cutting-edge technological products. In spite of the great declines in Novell's market position, primarily as a result of the predatory practices of Microsoft, it continues to be a world-leader in networking technology, driving technological advancement with products and features that Microsoft can only dream of having.

We also utilized the fantastically powerful features of WordPerfect, and clients that persevered to learn the power of WordPerfect were never disappointed. Many of us were absolutely thrilled to hear that Novell had acquired WordPerfect, trusting that a knowledgeable market would recognise a true alternative to Microsoft's growing power in the marketplace. The great majority of problems we encountered in our installations were the result of the changing target of Microsoft, changes that I personally believe were a part of a vast corporate mindset in Microsoft -- probably driven by the egos of Bill Gates, Steve Ballmer and a few others -- that intentionally stifled competition by constantly changing the rules of the game. Because these were corporate decisions, and the only products that could anticipate these changes were, in fact, Microsoft products, the die was cast.

I have used Microsoft products since DOS version 2, and was an early user of Windows(tm). Because of so-called "business compatibility issues," I abandoned Macintosh, and stored my Macintosh Plus in the closet, over 12 years ago; but have recently come back to the Macintosh environment. This decision was compelled by Microsoft's relentless push to control my personal computing life. I have been a savvy user of Microsoft products, but I learned long ago not to have any confidence in the "security" of any product Microsoft puts its hand to.

The current security issues with Microsoft products are the logical outcome of a corporate mindset that has never been driven to technological excellence. I personally believe that Microsoft is a corporation that has never produced a single technical breakthrough. I don't believe the person lives who can point to a ~single~ innovation in Microsoft technology, software environment, network security -- ANYTHING -- that Microsoft did not obtain from the wisdom and efforts of others. To the contrary, it has blatantly robbed and unconscionably stolen, lifted, copied, or otherwise acquired the technical innovations of others, including Xerox, IBM, Apple, Novell, WordPerfect, dBase and a litany of others.

Frankly, I was STUNNED that the court would even consider Microsoft's ridiculous offer of \$1 Billion to buy its way into the one market where it does not have a majority standing. According, I was THRILLED to hear that Microsoft's stonewalling in negotiation forced a wise judge to throw out the entire offer.

Microsoft needs to be hit where it hurts the most. Individual consumers on whom Microsoft has built its empire have funded Microsoft's growth through exorbitant fees and charges, even as alternate sources of product and services have fallen under the blows of Microsoft monopoly.

There should be substantial fines, limited attorney's fees, specific and substantial refunds (including interest and penalties) to ~legal~ users of Microsoft products, substantial limitations on licensing requirements that unduly stifle competition and/or competitive choice by the consumer, and enough clout within those penalties to insure that these offenses will never happen again.

Respectfully submitted,

rpb

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